

ITEM: 11

SUBJECT: Amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins to Revise Water Quality Objectives for pH and Turbidity

BOARD ACTION: *Consideration of Adoption of Proposed Amendment and Filing of Draft Environmental Documents*

BACKGROUND: The Regional Water Board has identified water quality regulation problems for discharges to streams under low flow conditions in its most recent Triennial Review work plans. One of these problems is meeting receiving water limitations for municipal wastewater treatment plants based on the current pH and turbidity objectives. The current pH and turbidity objectives are more stringent than current science recommends to protect beneficial uses and more stringent than current Federal criteria.

To resolve these regulatory difficulties, the Regional Water Board staff has developed an Amendment and a supporting staff report to revise the Basin Plan's existing pH and turbidity water quality objectives. The proposed amendments to the pH and turbidity objectives are consistent with current science, founded on Federal criteria, and consistent with Federal and State antidegradation policies.

The proposed pH amendment involves deletion of language from the Basin Plan regarding pH change and averaging periods. The language that is proposed to remain states that the pH of waters in the basins of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers must be maintained between 6.5 and 8.5.

The current turbidity objective includes four bulleted sections. The proposed amendment involves modification of the first bulleted item regarding natural turbidity between 0 and 5 NTUs. What is now one bulleted item will be split into two bulleted items. The new first bullet will address turbidity less than 1 NTU and will allow turbidity to increase up to 2 NTUs. The new second bullet will address turbidity between 1 and 5 NTUs and will continue to require that turbidity not increase more than 1 NTU. The remaining three bulleted items regarding turbidity at greater than 5 NTUs will remain unchanged.

A CEQA scoping meeting was held during the development of this Basin Plan Amendment to identify and address issues regarding the amendment. The Basin Plan amendment and staff report were submitted for an independent, external scientific peer review in accordance with Health and Safety Code section 57004. The proposed Basin Plan amendment and staff report have been revised in response to scientific peer review and public comments.

The proposed Basin Plan Amendment and staff report, as well as other supporting documentation, are available on our website at: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water\\_issues/basin\\_plans/ph\\_turbidity/index.html](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/ph_turbidity/index.html)

Written comments that will be responded to in a written response to comments are due on 10 October 2007. Comments and written responses to the comments will be provided to the Regional Water Board by the hearing.

ISSUES:

The issues to be considered are the following:

- Appropriateness of the proposed water quality objective for pH – The proposed pH amendment will delete the language from the Basin Plan regarding pH change and averaging periods but will maintain pH within a safe range. There are no known aquatic life impacts when pH varies but is maintained within the safe range.
- Appropriateness of the proposed water quality objective for turbidity – The proposed amendments will revise the portion of the turbidity objectives by dividing the category for natural turbidity between 0 and 5 NTUs into two categories, covering the ranges from 0 to 1 NTUs and from 1 to 5 NTUs. There are no known aquatic life impacts when turbidity is below 3 NTUs. There are no aesthetic difference in streams between 0 and 2 NTUs.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the Basin Plan Amendment

Mgmt. Review \_\_\_\_\_  
Legal Review \_\_\_\_\_

25/26 October 2007  
11020 Sun Center Dr. #200  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670